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Can Women Teach And Disobey Men? Biblical Evidence Says Yes!

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Because of the wide reach of Christianity and Paul's teachings, it is widely believed that women should not teach men and that a woman should obey her husband. However, there is little Biblical Evidence for this, especially for Jews. The Torah is full of strong empowered women.

Eve

Eve, who is never told directly by G-d but only by her husband that they should not eat of a certain tree, takes a fruit from the tree and eats. It is important to understand that Adam, who did have a direct order from G-d, was there the entire time and did not stop her. He too then eats of the fruit. Christian doctrine understands this as the original sin. However, Jewish tradition sees this as the story of man's awakening and original blessing. Because Eve ate of the tree, we have knowledge, agriculture, and the gift of children. By choosing knowledge over obeying her husband, Eve became the mother of all humanity and gave rise to many strong Israelite women who would also choose knowledge and power over obeying the male patriarchy.

Deborah

One such woman was Deborah, a judge and prophet in Israel. As a judge, she ruled over both men and women. Judges 4:5 tells us "And she (Deborah) held court under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites went up to her to have their disputes decided." It is apparent from this verse that Deborah was ruling over men.

In the following verses we see Deborah command Barack the leader of the Israeli army. She says to Barack: "The Lord, The G–d of Israel, commands you: "Go, take with you ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun and lead them up to Mount Tabor." With these words Deborah, a woman, commanded a man and the tribes of Israel to war.

There is no evidence in the Bible that the people were opposed in any way to Deborah's ruling of Israel. Indeed, Rabbinic tradition praises her fairness. Deborah's story enforces the truth that gender does not decide power. Rather, a person's leadership abilities decides if they are able to rule.

Jael

Later in Deborah's story, we meet Jael. Jael tricks and slaughters Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, by driving a tent peg through his skull while he sleeps. Jael is praised for this action in Jewish history and writings. While Sisera was an enemy of the Jews and not a Jewish man, this does show that women can act against male authority when necessary for the protection of their family, country, and faith. In fact, protecting one's family and faith is a requirement of Jewish law and to not do so would be a sin.

Sarah

Another strong Israelite woman and the matriarch of our faith, Sarah, also commanded her husband. First, she commands him to "go into" her slave Hagar in order to give her a child. Later when she decides Hagar's child should not inherit with her son, Issaac, Sarah commands Abraham to turn Hagar and her son out into the dessert to die.

This was no small matter. The Torah tells us Abraham was very stressed over this for the sake of his son with Hagar. Abraham did not want to turn his child out into the dessert.

In Gensis 21:12 we see how G-d felt about this matter. G-d tells Abraham: "Listen to whatever Sarah tells you…" This verse is powerful, for it shows that no matter how strongly a husband may feel about a subject G-d wants him to listen to his wife. In the end, G-d saved the slave and child. Because Abraham listened to his wife, G-d was able to rectify the situation while keeping Sarah and Abraham's marriage happy and intact. G-d sees the marriage of his people as the priority and teaches us that a husband should listen to his wife.

Vashti

Finally, we come to the story of Esther. When the story begins Vashti is queen. Vashti's husband demands her to come before him and his friends and dance wearing only her crown. Vashti refuses. She chooses modesty over obeying her husband. The Torah records no severe punishment of Vashti for this action, even though the king's friends ask him to punish her. Rather, The King divorces her and remarries. Vashti, said no to both her husband and her king, and she lived to tell the tale.

Esther

Because of Vashti's disobedience, Esther, a Jew, became queen. Esther would eventually use her role as Queen to go before the King without permission, an act that was punishable by death. She boldly asked that her people be allowed to fight back.

The Torah records that Eshter took this brave action after being told "And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this. " Esther 4:14. Esther was not punished for her boldness, but rather the Jews were given permission to defend themselves.

If there were no Esther, unafraid to speak her mind to the male powers that be, there might also be no Jews. Again, we see a woman disobey the authority of men to save her family and her faith. Esther is one of the most beloved characters in all of Jewish history because of her bold actions and defiance of male patriarchy.

Can a woman teach a man? Deborah did and history has recorded that it was good. Can a woman overrule a man? Sarah did and G-d ordered that the man listen to her. Can a woman defy male rule? Eve, Jael, Sarah, Vashti, and Esther all defied the male patriarchy and in doing so became the heroines of the Jewish nation. Women, yes you can!!

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